

# OPERA BEGINS AND ALVAREZ SCORES A TRIUMPH.



THE OPERA ITSELF, THE ARTISTS, AND THE AUDIENCE IN THE METROPOLITAN.

"Romeo and Juliet" Given at the Metropolitan, with Eames as the Heroine, but Without Jean De Reszke as the Hero, and the Success of the Opening Night Is Complete.

THE season of grand opera opened at the Metropolitan Opera House last night under auspices more favorable than for many seasons past. Never has Mr. Grau's enterprise attracted a larger or a finer audience. All of the boxes were occupied, most of them by representatives of the best society, whose names figure on the list of subscribers.

The New York debut of Alvarez was the great feature of the occasion, society and music lovers being curious to see whether he would acceptably fill the void supposed to have been created by the departure of Jean de Reszke.

The answer seemed to be in the affirmative, for Alvarez was repeatedly re-called.

## CRITICAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE.

By Giacomo Minkowsky.

ALVAREZ owes no apology for his Romeo of last night. Even those whose grief is deepest over the absence of Jean de Reszke will agree to that, in justice to the great tenor, who must prove his quality here as surely as though he had not already done so in Paris and London, we should not upon the advice of globe trotters in the foyer of the Metropolitan alter the balcony scene:

"Just wait till you have seen him in armor!"

As was to have been expected, the New York debut of Alvarez seemed to be regarded by the magnificent audience as an event quite as important as the inauguration of the grand opera season itself. The latter could not have been more satisfactory to Mr. Grau and to the subscribers, the great auditorium, including the tier boxes, was packed. I do not think I have seen a finer audience—more beautiful and charmingly gowned women, or men and women more attentive and respectful to the artists—anywhere in the world. It seemed to me, too, that it was an audience of music lovers—not of persons assembled to participate in a social occasion, such as the opening of the opera season necessarily is. This was favorable to Alvarez. The frivolous, the curious, the people who attend to see what is going on, the single idea of putting Alvarez against De Reszke, in the hope that he might fail, did not seem to be present.

De Reszke Was Not Forgotten.

Yet there was a strong De Reszke following. It showed itself in a significant manner when the curtain rose on the third act, revealing the broad back of Edouard as he Laurent at his prie-dieu. What was a meaning of that burst of applause, so full of keeping with the scene that it was most a shock? Was it for Edouard? Or was it for the name of De Reszke, with its memories of past seasons?

But already Alvarez had won cries of "Brava!" and recalls after the exquisite balcony scene, even the memory of which causes the heart to beat faster. Here the tenor had both poetry and passion. His voice was all that could be asked of a tenor. Eames, so much richer and warmer in her sentiment than when I heard her last, seemed to give Romeo the inspiration due from the Juliet of Shakespeare.

In the opera, when Juliet retires from the balcony, Romeo ends the act in an apostrophe, which showed the chief defect in Alvarez's vocal method. It is sung in the middle voice:

Soit he thy repose, till morning!  
On thine arms slumber dwell, and sweet peace  
In thy bosom: would I were asleep, and peace  
So sweet to rest!

The tenor here was off the key repeatedly, singing flat in his middle register. It

was his only offence of this kind—almost his only offence of any kind.

### An Effect of Nervousness.

It was because he was slightly nervous, and because in his lower register, into which he does not progress smoothly, he gave the volume to be expected of a baritone. It was plain that if his tone had been slightly thinner his pitch would have been true.

It was the B flat of Alvarez that won him his first applause. There was enough of it for half a dozen tenors. He might have gone to sleep on it, carried it on in his dreams and awakened with it as good as ever. From that B flat down to the abrupt entrance to his middle voice it was such a tenor as New York has not heard before.

Later, in the duet scene, there was a better opportunity for Alvarez. Where the drama was strong, so was he. The end of the opera found him intrenched more firmly in the estimation of his audience than seemed possible, considering that Alvarez is a dramatic tenor, and "Romeo and Juliet" a purely lyrical opera.

Eames shared in the honors, as she well deserved to do. M. Lily, the new baritone, who sang Mercutio, had little opportunity to show his quality. Mlle. Oltzka was spirited and in excellent voice as Stephano. The Gertrude of Mlle. Baumeister won the applause of an established favorite. This was true of Plancon, the Capulet. M. Jacques Bars was a sufficiently fiery Tybalt. Manteilli conducted, and the orchestra was true to the church-like effects of Gounod.

### As to the Opera Itself.

The composer, however great he may be, has been forced to admit that Shakespeare is too strong for him. The true lovers of that master of the drama of all times appreciate that the words he places in the mouths of his characters are all sufficient. They express without other aid every passion, stand as perfect symbols for every idea, illustrate every motive. The actor who utters them need only to place upon each the proper emphasis and to accompany them with the action which they indicate. Let him be the greatest tenor or the greatest baritone the world has ever heard, to envelope these words in melody adds nothing to their force; generally it must only obscure their meaning.

Verdi has this to confess, as well as the spirit of Gounod. That "Romeo and Juliet" naturally falls into the domain of lyrical opera, enabling Gounod to avoid the obstacles which Verdi had to surmount in his operatic treatment of "Othello," "Falstaff" and "Macbeth," did not serve to lighten the task of the composer of "Faust." That is partly because of the peculiar limitations of Gounod. His genius was essentially ecclesiastical. Altar cloths, priestly vestments, the swaying of the censer, surplised choir boys, the odor of incense are everywhere in Gounod's music. They nearly robbed him of a production of "Faust."

"This is not a church, my dear fellow," said Carvalho, of the grand opera.

### It Is Gowned in Disguise.

In "Romeo and Juliet" Gounod disguised himself to such an extent that many find him unrecognizable. Possibly, for that reason, and because of the lighter task for the tenor, "Romeo and Juliet" the opera may outlive the operas, "Falstaff," "Othello," and "Macbeth," of Verdi, and "Hamlet," of Ambrose Thomas. Only Tamino, with his ability to produce the open F sharp, so fatal to most tenors, saved "Othello." Oltzka, the Brazilian tenor, who followed Tamino in the part, did so at the sacrifice of his voice.

A parallel familiar to New Yorkers was the experience of Melba in the part of Brunhilde. Here Wagner demands of the soprano what Shakespeare demands of the tenor.

The Journal printed last week 10,817 employment "Want" Ads., which is 8,311 more than any other newspaper.

tenor who undertakes to interpret him. Melba, whose vocal powers are purely lyrical, wisely spared herself and resigned Brunhilde to Nordica.

With Tamagnos and Nordicas so scarce, and Wagner still in the heyday of his vogue, the argument seems to be against the survival of Shakespeare in an operatic dress.

## SOCIETY'S PLUMAGE HIGHLY BRILLIANT.

Gowns of the Women in "the Double Horse Shoe" Like a Glimpse of Paris.

GOUGEONOUSLY gowned and jewelled women filled the double horse shoe of boxes in the Metropolitan Opera House last evening at the opening of the opera season. To the fashionable world it was more than this, it was the opening of the social season, of which the Horse Show was the prelude.

Mrs. Astor arrived late, looking remarkably well in velvet of the shade of dregs of wine, and wearing some of her famous jewels, her diamond stars on a black velvet band around her throat, necklaces of diamonds and diamonds in her hair. With her was Mrs. John Jacob Astor, who wore a gown of silver gray satin, spangled and embroidered with silver and set off by diamonds. She wore a flatter of them and a collar made of enormous solitaires.

Mrs. George Peabody Wetmore was gowned in black velvet trimmed with exquisite lace, and wore diamond ornaments. Miss Wetmore looked very pretty in shell pink satin crepe with white roses in her hair. She wore a superb pearl necklace.

Mrs. George F. Baker wore white satin, embroidered with silver. Mrs. Henry Clews had Miss Elsie Clews with her. Mrs. Clews wore a gown of cream lace, with shoulder bands of turquoise velvet and a diamond coronet. Her hair was in pink crepe, set off with knots of black velvet and a wreath of pink roses in her hair.

Mrs. Frank Edgerton Webb wore white velvet, with trimmings of silver. Mrs. Ogden Mills and Mrs. Whitelaw Reid were in D. O. Mills's box. Mrs. Mills wore the palest of shell-pink velvet and lace and a tiara of diamonds. Mrs. Reid was in turquoise velvet and lace and wore diamond ornaments.

### Wife of Former Vice-President.

Mrs. Levi P. Morton was gowned in ivory satin, trimmed with point lace, and diamond ornaments. Two of her daughters were with her, one in black velvet, with silver spangles, and the other in white mousseline de sole over pink.

Mrs. Stanford White's gown was of cream satin. A bunch of white roses was arranged on her right shoulder, and she wore a silver gauze headpiece.

Mrs. A. Lanfear Norrie wore a green tulle gown, with black boots, and Miss Barber was in white, with pink roses on her corsage.

Mrs. Alexander T. Van Nest wore a gown of silver satin, with a bunch of white feathers in her hair. Miss Van Nest's dress of white crepe was almost completely covered with silver spangles, like a coat of mail.

Mrs. William Jay wore a gown of black velvet and diamond ornaments. With her was Mrs. Charles May Delrich, who was dressed in white satin, trimmed with white gauze and pink velvet bows.

Mrs. James Sherer wore pink velvet, trimmed with pink roses and diamond ornaments. Mrs. T. Wilson's costume, of silver gray satin, was set off by face and diamonds. With her were Mrs. M. Orme Wilson and Mrs. Edmund L. Baylies. Mrs. M. Orme Wilson wore rose satin, trimmed with point lace, which made a charming background for some diamond ornaments. Mrs. Baylies was dressed in turquoise velvet, trimmed with knots of black. She wore aigrettes in her hair.

### Costumes of the Gerys.

Mrs. Elbridge T. Gerry's gown of gray satin was trimmed with iridescent jets. Miss Mabel Gerry wore pink satin crepe and a big bunch of violets on her bodice.

The horrors of dyspepsia and indigestion disappear when Johnson's Digestive Tablets are taken.



Giacomo Minkowsky.

This distinguished musician reviews the opening performance of the operatic season for the Journal.

Miss Angelica Gerry was in light blue crepe and gauze.

Mrs. Hermann Oelrichs wore pale blue satin. Her bodice was draped with ropes of pearls and she wore a diamond tiara. Mrs. Frank Hillhouse was with her, wearing a costume of gray satin, with garniture of pink roses.

Mrs. W. Watts Sherman was effectively gowned in black velvet, which showed off to admirable advantage some of her diamonds which trimmed her corsage.

Miss Marie Winthrop was in cream satin trimmed with lace.

Lady Colbrook was one of the handsomest women in the brilliant assemblage. Her gown of pale blue satin was covered with a white net, on which were applique flowers in white satin. She wore diamonds on her bodice and in her hair.

Mrs. Lloyd Bryce was clad in cream satin with lace trimmings and wore a tiara of diamonds. Miss Bryce wore white chiffon.

Mrs. Frederick Nelson was in white satin and wore some magnificent jewels.

Mrs. A. D. Juillard's gown of black satin was combined with turquoise velvet and spangled with silver.

## INCIDENTS THAT ESCAPED MANY.

Two Women Fainted—Gentlemen from the Klondike Were There.

Two women fainted in the stifling atmosphere of the Opera House at the close of the first act. One of them recovered immediately on being carried to the promenade, but a trip to a neighboring drug store for smelling salts was necessary to restore the other to consciousness. They had been standing in the rear of the orchestra circle, and chivalrous gentlemen offered seats to their escorts, but they went back pluckily to their uncomfortable positions.

When the curtain rose on the first act but three boxes were occupied. During this act and the act following the boxes filled up, until, at the beginning of the third, the whole circle was a garden of pretty women backed by correctly dressed men. Despite the late arrival of the boxholders the rest of the audience was not annoyed, for the tardy ones made their entrances on tiptoe.

To the delight of those who like to hear a song well rendered, like to give the singer his or her meed of applause and pass on, the first act, showed that the management is disposed to ignore the "encore fiasco."

Mme. Eames refused to repeat her first number, and was sustained by a majority of the audience that quietly hissed the enthusiastic handclappers.

Immediately following the entrance of Mme. Eames as Juliet and Mlle. Baumeister as Gertrude in the first act there

occurred a funny bit of stage-business that was not generally observed. Mme. Eames started down the stage, with Mlle. Baumeister immediately behind and a little to the left. Mlle. Baumeister accidentally stepped on the train of Mme. Eames's gown. There was a half audible rip, a slight pause in the melody and Mlle. Baumeister leaped backward with more alacrity than might have been expected from the famous tenor. Had Mme. Eames taken another step—well!

The stage manager of one of the most pretentious of the present Broadway productions saw the first and second acts of the opera. He adjourned to a neighboring cafe and proclaimed his opinion of the performance.

"I've no fault to find with the staging," he said, "nor with the general set of the stage, nor with the handling of the chorus, but if I had a property man that put up as had a moon as they showed in the balcony scene I'd give him a swift plunge off the Brooklyn Bridge."

Youths attired in ragged raiment and adorned with large tin badges infected the neighborhood of the Metropolitan for blocks, importuning everybody who looked like a prospective operator to buy tickets of the opera at cut rates. The outposts were stationed at Forty-second street and Sixth avenue and Thirty-sixth street and Broadway, and from these points there were picket lines diverging to Fortieth street and Broadway, with skirmishers about every seven feet. The enterprising person who employed them undoubtedly reaped a harvest.

Three gentlemen, wearing suits obviously made for general distribution, slouch hats and flannel shirts, paid uncomplainingly for orchestra seats, took them and sat the show out. After the performance they made their way to the Hotel Rivers, sought a secluded corner of the cafe and sat down to talk it over.

"When you get back to Dawson, Bill," queried one, "will you tell 'em that you liked it?"

"Jim," replied the one addressed as Bill, "it cost five dollars, and I don't know what it was about, but by gosh, Jim, I'm game."

## Notes of Society.

Mrs. Charles D. Dickey, of No. 11 East Thirty-fourth street, will entertain at dinner on Christmas Day.

Mrs. Hermann Oelrichs will give her usual Christmas party for her little son on Christmas Day. There will be a big tree laden with toys and remembrances for the boy and the family's friends.

Mrs. Charles Finney Cox, of No. 54 East Sixty-seventh street, will give a reception on Saturday.

Samuel D. Babcock and the Misses Babcock will entertain a large dinner company on Christmas Day at their home, No. 636 Fifth avenue.

Mrs. John R. Drexel will give a dance at Sherry's on January 2.

Opera suppers promise to be quite a feature at Sherry's this winter and bid fair to be among the most enjoyable forms of entertainment.

Holly and holly colors are being used a great deal for decorations of all kinds just now. Even the baskets which Thelma is using for Christmas gifts are either of deep green or scarlet and tied with ribbons to match.

Mrs. George Crocker's residences will be trimmed with holly and Christmas greens to night, when she will give a large reception, which will serve as a house warming. Mme. Emma Nevada and Signor Cimpinatti will be among the entertainers.

Mrs. Frederic H. Betts, of No. 22 East Sixty-fifth street, will give a reception this afternoon for her son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Willis Rosier Betts.

The Christmas dance of the Juniors' Club will be given at Sherry's to-night. It will be attended by nearly all the Junior's debutantes.

Mrs. Thomas Huger Pratt, of No. 29 Waverley place, will give a large dinner dance at Sherry's to-night for her daughter, Miss Henrietta Wright, whose engagement to Count Mercato, of Greece, was announced last week.

Mrs. A. Lanfear Norrie will entertain at dinner this evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Harmon Hendricks, of No. 335 West Eighty-ninth street, will give a large reception this evening.

The second of the Fortnightly Dances under the patronage of Mrs. Lewis Livingston Deland and others takes place at the Waldorf to-night.

Mrs. Egbert Guernsey and Miss

Guernsey, of No. 181 Central Park South, will give a reception this evening for Mrs. Fiske.

Mrs. Henry B. Wilson, of No. 7 West Eighty-sixth street, has cards out for a tea this afternoon.

Miss Pinkham will give a "high noon" concert at Sherry's to-day.

Elliott Schenck will give the third of his explanatory recitals on Wagner's music dramas to-day at the Berkeley Locom.

Mrs. Westervelt, of No. 7 West Fifty-third street, will give a reception this afternoon in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal.

The ladies interested in the Women's Department of the Southern Exposition will meet this afternoon at the home of the president, Mrs. E. End Avenue.

Roger A. Prior, No. 5 West Sixty-ninth street, at 2 o'clock.

Mrs. Frank Mauran, of Providence, accompanied by her two daughters, sailed on Saturday for Bermuda, where they will spend the winter.

Members' day at the St. Nicholas Skating Rink yesterday brought out the usual number of fashionable skaters. Tea was served during the afternoon.

Mrs. Laura Riddle Green, of No. 59 Madison avenue, gave a dance last evening for her daughter, Miss Laura Teskeberg Green, who made her debut on Saturday.

Mrs. C. R. Elverson gave a dinner party last evening at her residence, No. 784 West 144th street.

1899 DECEMBER 1899						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	Xmas					

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